

Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority Board Meeting

January 4, 2017

LRTA Board Minutes

Location: Palmetto Breeze

Chair David Blauch called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

Chris Bickley offered the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll: David Blauch, Ginnie Kozak, Rick Hamilton, Chris Bickley, and Susan Zellman, Jake Rawl, Louise Pinkney arrived 2:20

Absent: Barbara Childs

Also in Attendance: Paula Tilley, Mary Lou Franzoni, Mark Stanley, Laura Atkinson, Nigeria Walker; Palmetto Breeze; Charlie Rutkowski, CTAA

Chair Blauch welcomed Mary Lou Franzoni and Mark Stanley as Palmetto Breeze employees. Nigeria Walker was introduced as the new Driver Supervisor; she came from Chatham County GA School bus operations, where she supervised over 300 drivers in a system with 450 buses.

Approval of Minutes – November 19, 2016

Motion to approve, Rick Hamilton; second, Susan Zellman. Motion carried

Action Items:

Ms. Franzoni presented the Beaufort COA contract for transportation.

Motion to approve Action Items, Jake Rawls; Second, Rick Hamilton. Motion carried.

Ms. Tilley presented the revised budget for the current fiscal year. She reviewed all the changes made on the budget including how the cost allocations are made to all the contract routes, which raises expenses significantly and their contract rates will need to be bumped up at renewal.

Motion to approve revised budget, Susan Zellman; Second, Jake Rawl. Motion carried.

Director's Report:

Ms. Franzoni stated Jessica Johnson, the Mobility Manager resigned; her last day was December 16th. Upon review of the needs of the Operations department, an additional supervisor was more critical than a dedicated Mobility Manager. While a Mobility Manager was needed at the startup of the program, with the reduction in the coordinated services a dedicated manager is no longer a top priority. Laura

will take on the mobility duties and her title is now AGM of Operations and Mobility. This has given us the ability to hire an additional supervisor and stay within the budget in operations. Once we receive the Urbanized area grant funds, we plan to hire a safety professional which will give us 4 people in operations. Yazmin Winston is out on medical leave and will return in February.

Ms. Tilley and I are on the Leadership Team for March of Dimes. The walk is in April and will take place in Bluffton. They have some big sponsors such as K-Mart, Publix, and Beaufort Hospital.

Ms. Atkinson and I met with the director of Program for Exceptional People (PEP) from Hilton Head. Their transportation was being provided by Palbert through Medicaid funding. As this is not medical transportation, Palbert stopped providing service for PEP in September. The staff of PEP has been doing it in the interim. We gave them ideas on what we could do for them, but they need to figure out funding. We may get a route with them, but we are not sure.

Susan Zellman and I met with the director of Staying Connected in Sun City. They have all volunteers doing transportation and provide quite a bit of rides for the residents of Sun City. Ms. Franzoni stated we cannot help them now, but maybe someday in the future.

Ms. Franzoni gave a presentation on the plans for increased bus service in the Bluffton/Hilton Head area as well as the new urbanized area funding to the Bluffton/Hilton Head Leadership class. The other presenters included Andrew Fulghum, Jasper County Administrator and a representative from the Savannah Airport. Mr. Fulghum discussed the Jasper port plans and the Airport representative discussed the new airlines that are currently serving the airport as well as the airlines that they are in discussion with for future markets. Her presentation included the marketing they do in combination with the Chamber in the new areas that are served.

On November 11th, our staff had a post Hurricane meeting. We discussed what we could do different next time. Ms. Franzoni and Mr. Stanley also attended the Beaufort County post Hurricane meeting. One of the lessons learned was regarding communication during and after the event. The Communications officer was not addressing the social media posts during the hurricane and especially for the re-entry process. Rumors were spread because there wasn't accurate information being posted. Mr. Stanley stated that there was miscommunication between the Governor's information and what was occurring in Beaufort County. The Governor was stating things that weren't true for the entire state, such as there were two pet shelters in the Lowcountry when in fact they were in Charleston. Governor Haley also reported that all counties were open when in fact Beaufort County was still closed. Ms. Kozak agreed, the Emergency Management did not update their website. Ms. Franzoni stated that she raised the issue of a special needs shelter with a generator for people who needed electric for their medical equipment at the county de-briefing.

The Regional Rodeo took place at May River High School in January. Our drivers placed well and received 5 of the 9 awards given out. The State Rodeo will be in Myrtle Beach at the end of March. Not only do the driver's compete in the skills test, they also receive training as part of the program.

Finance Director's Report:

Ms. Tilley reviewed the financial statement. One of the items over budget was the credit card processing fees. She will follow up with Haig Point Ferry regarding their sending passengers over to our office to pay for their Daufuskie Ferry Tickets by credit card when they can do that on the boat. This causes us to receive more credit card fees which were not planned on.

Chairperson's Report:

Chair Blauch reported that the decision was made to terminate First Transit, and I am pleased to say that the employees are now working for Palmetto Breeze. It seems there was a miscommunication with our attorney as far the contract is concerned. We were told it was a breach of contract since we didn't have one that was current and we didn't need to give First Transit any notice. Their attorney wanted us to give notice and is expecting us to pay for November and December's management fees. We no longer have a contract with them and they do not have a claim for the Maintenance Manager and Executive Director position. Ms. Franzoni's contract with the Board for her employment is for 8 years as this is the vesting requirement for the state retirement plan. We do have the right to dismiss her with due cause if agreed to by the Chair of the Board. She must continue to meet her performance requirements. We have the legal right to hire them both to work directly for Palmetto Breeze. Our attorney does not feel we will receive any more letters from First Transit. We always have the right to terminate the positions at any time and stated we no longer have First Transit employees so they cannot charge us the management fee.

Chair Blauch reported he worked with Ms. Franzoni and Ms. Tilley to fill out the required paperwork with the FTA to be designees for the funds we are expected to get.

All policies need to be revised to remove any reference to First Transit.

Committee/Project Reports

Operations

Rick Hamilton and Chris Bickley reviewed operations. The cameras are recording on some of the buses and they have helped a lot in regards to nuisance claims and retraining employees on driver behavior. December had zero accidents with no significant incidents. Random and new employee drug screenings are being done in compliance.

Maintenance

Chair Blauch reported that maintenance is in good shape, 100% compliance for PM's. There was one major equipment failure, a master relay which was repaired in house. Mark and Jasan went to MCI Training and everything is going smooth. They have become masters at windshield replacements since the hurricane. Mark Stanley learned quite a few things from the Hurricane, such as you can't open the bay doors without electricity. Chair Blauch asked if we moved all the buses off site. Ms. Franzoni

replied yes, they were at the shelters or at the Beaufort Wal-Mart. Mr. Stanley stated that portions of the fence on the back side of the property were destroyed and we had to have 18 trees removed.

Finance Committee

Jake Rawls stated that everything was in compliance. The financial audit looked great. The auditor did suggest someone review the Journal Entries that are made, and we decided that we will do that during the finance reviews.

Old Business

Charlie Rutkowski from CTAA stated he is working on the technical assistance project. Priorities have been identified in 2016. One of them is revisions of timing of routes to accommodate 2nd shift workers. Numbers are being crunched to see demand and costing out. He asks if Ms. Tilley would send the revised budget. In the marketing area, we need to change the perception of Palmetto Breeze. Education needs to come first, because we assume people know about transit. You start by networking with small groups and places. I am working on a few things and I can come to the April 26th meeting, but I may send my marketing person. Ms. Franzoni requests that they meet to discuss strategy.

Ms. Franzoni gave an update on our Designated Recipient status with the FTA. We had Chair Blauch sign our permissions to use the FTA Computer system known as TRAMS, which is where you track your grants and do your statistical reporting. We need to go to training for the system. We are hoping to hear from the FTA by Friday on our status but we think we are good to go and we will report to the Board when we hear. We must come up with a budget for the grant approval and then will put in for the grant. Ms. Kozak offers her assistance if needed.

Ms. Kozak reports that the LATS workshop was scheduled for discussion of infrastructure on the new port in Jasper County. One item that needs to be addressed is public transportation. More talk about the Bluffton/Hilton Head area because of the new designation. Ms. Franzoni stated that Colin Kinton from Beaufort County called her. He is the county's traffic engineer. He wanted to discuss bus service between Bluffton and Hilton Head that would help relieve the congestion over the bridges. He wants me to present a plan to the County in January. The Urban money has peaked everyone's interest. Everyone asks can you do this or that, and I say yes, but we need dedicated funding. The shuttle from Coligny to Shelter Cove on HHI is going in the right direction. When the County calls it's a big deal because they are finally asking us. Mr. Rutkowski offers his help with this project. Ms. Kozak states they have confidence in the organization now. Requests are being made from us for ideas and transportation. If it moves forward, then we meet with these larger employers and offer incentives and help connect employees. Mr. Rutkowski reminds everyone that there is a tax break for using public transportation. Ms. Franzoni requests that he get that information to her so she can use that in her presentation. Chris Bickley stated that is very impressive to be invited to the town's strategic planning. Ms. Franzoni states yes, having the funding has gotten everyone's attention. Mayor Bennett brought it up at the State of the Region address as well as Council Member Paul Summerville who spoke about improving Palmetto Breeze transit services.

New Business

The new Board Meeting schedule is handed out, which are on the last Wednesdays of the month as per the bylaws.

Chair Blauch needs to appoint two people to the Nomination Committee for nominating a new Board Chair and Vice Chair. He asks for volunteers who will interview the current Board members to gauge their interest in serving as Chair. Rick Hamilton and Louise Pinkney volunteer. Chair Blauch appoints Mr. Hamilton and Ms. Pinkney to the Nomination Committee. Vice Chair Childs does not want to be the Chair even though she is currently the Vice Chair. Our Bylaws do not state she must be the next Chair. Ms. Franzoni states she will find out when Chair Blauch's term ends so they have a time frame to elect someone else. Ms. Kozak states we are still missing a Hampton representative. Ms. Franzoni will ask them again to appoint someone. She will send an email with the bylaws and the dates of the terms.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 3:30 PM Jake Rawls, Second, Rick Hamilton, Motion carried.